

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

BE IT KNOWN THAT Ruth Wilson, Miyi Chung, Maris Cobb and Kevin Shaw, who are citizens of the United States of America, residents of Picayune, MS, Terrytown, LA, Hattiesburg, MS and Gulfport, MS, respectively, have invented certain new and useful improvements in "A DISTRIBUTED OBJECT-ORIENTED GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND METHOD THEREOF" of which the following is a specification:

Please Contact Preparer:
Charles J. Stockstill
Reg. No. 34935
Tel: 202-404-1553
Date:

Inventors: Wilson et al.
Serial No.

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

5 **TITLE OF THE INVENTION**

**A DISTRIBUTED OBJECT-ORIENTED GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION
DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND METHOD THEREOF**

10 **RELATED APPLICATION**

The present application is related to the commonly assigned pending United States patent application Serial No. 09/448,765 filed on November 24, 1999 entitled "Method and Apparatus for Building and Maintaining an Object-Oriented Geospatial Database", which is incorporated by reference herein. This application claims priority from a provisional application, Serial No. (Not Yet Assigned) filed on August 25, 2000, entitled A DISTRIBUTED OBJECT-ORIENTED GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND METHOD THEREOF", Navy Case No. 80, 172.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to distributing information of an object-oriented database using object-oriented technology. More particularly, the present invention relates to distributing and maintaining information of an object-oriented database of geospatial data.

25 Further, the present invention relates to distributing and maintaining information of an object-oriented database of geospatial data of multiple data types, such as Vector Product Format (VPF), Raster Product Format (RPF), Text Product Standard (TPS), Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI) shape files, Generic Sensor Format (GSF), oceanographic ASCII text data provided by the Naval Oceanographic Office (NAVOCEANO) and geospatial
30 data with temporal information.

Description of the Related Art

The object-oriented geospatial database (i.e., database including data having spatial information) described in the pending commonly assigned application referenced herein implements object-oriented geographic data models of vector mapping data, such as VPF. Geographic data modeling using object-oriented technology is in contrast to conventional geographic or geospatial databases, which are implemented as "relational" data models or structures. For example, as discussed in the pending commonly assigned application, in a complex relational database model of vector mapping data, such as VPF provided by the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA), the database model is represented as "databases", each "database" containing one or more "libraries" with associated "coverages or themes", and "features" associates with each "coverage or theme". In particular, the "relational" data model paradigm typically requires that the "coverage", "features", and topological data reside in many tables that must be queried upon every request for information from the database. Because of the number of tables involved, maintaining referential integrity of the VPF database upon an update is difficult. This difficulty arises because the VPF relies on data residing within multiple specialized tables on multiple levels of the VPF relational database. Further, since viewing, query and manipulation of each geospatial data of a different format typically requires corresponding software, integration of the geospatial data of different formats becomes difficult at best.

Further, as described in the pending commonly assigned application, in contrast to relational database structures storing geospatial data, an object-oriented data structure storing geospatial data, topological and other spatial relationships reside in linked objects, and updates to the data can be handled more simply and directly. The object-oriented paradigm properties of identity, encapsulation, inheritance, and polymorphism, overcome the problems associated with existing mechanisms for querying, updating, and translating geospatial data, such as VPF data, by providing a geospatial information distribution system that permits easy and complete updating of VPF data, more complex queries of VPF data, and direct exporting of VPF data

Inventors: Wilson et al.
Serial No.

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

5 from the object-oriented database structure into a relational database structure. In particular,
the object-oriented paradigm accommodates data-driven (i.e., data structure of data does not
have to be known prior to query for information) queries, constrained query, and nested or
complex queries. Further, the object-oriented paradigm also permits easy use of data of
differing formats and structures within an integrated geospatial information system. In
10 particular, existing data in VPF, RPF, and TPS files are incorporated onto a single, object-
oriented platform for access.

A characteristic of a traditional geographical information system (GIS) based upon the
“relational” database structure, is that a user’s interaction with data via a user interface is at
visual level. For example, the interaction between a user and a map display is only at visual
level when zooming. In particular, queries in such traditional GIS are considered “pre-
formatted” requests. This characteristic frustrates easy distribution and access to continuously
updated complex data having spatial information and temporal information.

Further, generally, users have to utilize many software applications on their local
computer to access and display mapping data of multiple data types. Typically, data
distribution in such systems is in the form of CD-ROM or other media, and would often take
days to be distributed to user. For example, data associated with an area of interest (AOI)
would be located in several different places (i.e., there is not a single source that users could
access to obtain all mapping data available for the AOI). Although, efforts have been made to
provide retrieval and viewing of mapping data over the World Wide Web (WWW) these
25 applications are limited in the data types that they can display, and in the availability of data
associated with the display. In particular, regarding accessing geospatial databases, traditional
systems that use removable storage media replace the existing database on the removable
storage media with updated database and distribute the updated database to users. Further, a
separate software application or commercial off the shelf software package, such as a GIS
30 software package (e.g., ArcView by Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.,
Redlands, California) customized for or compatible with the database is executed on the user’s

Inventors: Wilson et al.
Serial No.

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

5 or local computer (i.e., client computer) to access the database. Such traditional systems may also be implemented over the Internet or the WWW. Similar to the counterpart non-Internet implementations, the database is stored as a library on a server computer connected to the Internet and the library is distributed (i.e., downloaded by the user or local computer using, for example, File Transfer Protocol) to the user's or local computer for access using the
10 separate GIS software package executing on the local computer. Therefore, these traditional systems involve two steps of loading or downloading data or database to the local computer from the remote computer or removable storage media (e.g., CD-ROM) and then loading a separate software application in the local computer to access the data.

The use of geographic data is becoming pervasive across many disciplines. At the same time, end users are becoming increasingly dependent upon the web as a source of readily available, easily accessible information. Accordingly, in view of these two factors there is a need for development of systems capable of immediate and efficient distribution and access to complex data having spatial and temporal information (i.e., geospatial data).

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the invention is to provide a distributed object-oriented geospatial database system and method thereof over a client/server network.

Another object of the invention is to provide a distributed object-oriented geospatial database system and method thereof over the Internet using web-based technology to perform
25 data-driven queries, such as retrieving, viewing and updating, geospatial data of the object-oriented geospatial database, such as vector, raster, hypertext and multimedia data, as well as remote updating of vector data.

Another object of the invention is to provide a distributed object-oriented geospatial database system and method thereof over a client/server network supporting multiple data
30 types or formats of ESRI shape file, GSF, oceanographic ASCII text data by NAVOCEANO and geospatial data with temporal information.

Inventors: Wilson et al.
Serial No.

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

5 Another object of the invention is to provide a distributed object-oriented geospatial database system and method thereof over a client/server network supporting 3D display of geospatial data.

 Yet another object of the invention is to provide a distributed objected-oriented geospatial database system in a heterogeneous object-oriented development and integration
10 environment using the Common Object Request Broker Architecture (CORBA).

 The above objects are attained in a networked computer system environment by designing object models for the geospatial data, creating an object-oriented database of the geospatial data using the object models, storing the object-oriented database on a storage unit connected to the network, specifying an area of interest from a map image or visual image, representing active data objects and displayed on a computer on the network, querying from the computer over the network data objects in the database associated with the area of interest, receiving in the computer over the network data objects in the database associated with the area of interest, and displaying the data objects. In particular, querying involves in response to performing a single action, querying from the computer over the network data objects in the database associated with the area of interest.

 Further, in a networked computer system environment building and maintaining an object-oriented spatial database from at least two or more data formats by instantiating objects of the object-oriented database, using at least two of the Vector Product Format (VPF), Raster Product Format (RPF), Text Product Standard (TPS), Environmental Systems Research
25 Institute (ESRI) shape, Generic Sensor Format (GSF), Naval Oceanographic Office text (NAVOCEANO), and temporal information databases; initializing spatial and non-spatial feature data of the object-oriented database; and spatially indexing data among objects from the at least two VPF, RPF, TPS, ESRI, GSF, NAVOCEANO and temporal information databases into the single, object-oriented spatial database.

30 Further, computer programs according to the present invention and stored on a computer-readable media to access in real-time geospatial data over a network, comprise an

Inventors: Wilson et al.
Serial No.

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

5 object-oriented database server code section to store data having spatial and temporal
information, a client code section, and an interface code section in communication with the
server code section and the client code section over the network to transmit and receive
messages querying the data. In particular, programming language of the client code section
differs from programming language of the server code section, providing a heterogeneous
10 object-oriented geospatial database system in a networked computer system. Further, the data
includes at least two or more data formats of Vector Product Format (VPF), Raster Product
Format (RPF), Text Product Standard (TPS), Environmental Systems Research Institute shape
format (ESRI), Generic Sensor Format (GSF), and Naval Oceanographic Office text format
(NAVOCEANO).

These and other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent and more
readily appreciated from the following description of the preferred embodiments, taken in
conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is an illustration of client/server system in which the invention may be
implemented.

Fig. 2 depicts a block diagram of software system to build, access and maintain
information of an object-oriented database of geospatial data of multiple data types in a
standalone or non-networked computer system.

Fig. 3 shows the data structure of an object-oriented geospatial database stored in a
storage unit and used in the invention.

Fig. 4A depicts a block diagram of software system according to the invention in the
client/server system in Fig. 1.

Fig. 4B depicts a block diagram of software system according to the invention in the
client/server in Fig. 1, which uses a firewall.

5 Figs. 5A and 5B depict a more detailed block diagram of the software system according to the invention in the client/server system in Fig. 4A.

Figs. 6A and 6B depict a more detailed block diagram of the software system according to the invention in the client/server system in Fig. 4B.

10 Fig. 7 shows a display screen of the system according to the invention for selecting an AOI.

Fig. 8 shows another display screen of the system according to the invention for selecting an AOI.

Fig. 9 shows a display screen of the system according to the invention for selecting active or available data represented as databases, libraries, coverages, and features corresponding to the selected AOI in Figs. 7 or 8.

Fig. 10 shows a display screen of the system according to the invention for displaying features available for the selected AOI with reference to an available map image associated with the AOI.

Fig. 11 shows a display screen for advanced queries.

Fig. 12 shows a display screen for temporal data queries.

Fig. 13 shows a display screen for attribute queries.

Fig. 14 shows a display screen for queries relating to distances between two points selected on the display screen.

25 Fig. 14A shows a code section in JAVA to calculate distances between two points selected on the display screen.

Fig. 15 shows a display screen for querying available multimedia relating to the AOI.

Fig. 16 shows a display screen relating to raster image display options.

Fig. 17 shows a display screen displaying text features.

Fig. 18A shows a display screen for downloading libraries, coverages or features.

30 Fig. 18B shows a display screen for feature drawing options.

5 Fig. 19 is illustrating the flow of operations in the invention to support 3D display of
geospatial data.

 Fig. 20 show a class structure to describe in 3D the geospatial data in the object-
oriented geospatial database of the invention.

 Fig. 21 show the VPF attributes used in describing in 3D the geospatial data in the
10 object-oriented geospatial database of the invention.

 Fig. 22 show mapping of VPF class to VRML class in the object-oriented geospatial
database of the invention.

 Fig. 23 is a description of levels of detail for a feature of VPF data as displayed in 3D
in Fig. 24.

 Fig. 24 is a screen display of a feature of VPF data in 3D.

 Fig. 25 is another screen display of a feature VPF data in 3D.

 Fig. 26 depicts a block diagram of software system to update the object-oriented
geospatial database of the invention in the client/server system in Fig. 1.

 Fig. 27 shows the format of server history log in a local client server or master server
20 in the client/server system in Fig. 1.

 Fig. 28 show the format of a client history log in a local client server in the
client/server system in Fig. 1.

 Fig. 29 shows the application level protocol between the local client server and another
local client server or master server for receiving available updates from the other local client
25 server or master server (as the case may be) in the client/server system in Fig. 1.

 Fig. 30 shows a display screen in the local client server for receiving available updates
from another local client server or master server in the client/server system in Fig. 1.

30 **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**

Reference will now be made in detail to the preferred embodiments of the present

Inventors: Wilson et al.
Serial No.

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

5 invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout. The embodiments are described below to explain the present invention by referring to the figures.

10 The database system according to the present invention, uses Internet enabled technology, such as Web browser technology, and object-oriented technology to provide real-time or interactive remote access to geospatial data over a network (i.e., one step). In particular, the user in one step can, for example, view the data objects stored in a remote location (i.e., computer server), without downloading from a remote computer to the local computer the entire database (or an entire segment of the database) on the local computer and executing a separate software in the local computer to view the database. Further, in contrast to traditional GIS software, which actually stores data on the local computer (e.g., the computer's hard drive), the present invention uses a Web-based applet executing on the local client computer but still resident on the remote server computer. When the browser software is closed, there is no software resident on the local computer's hard drive (i.e., no data had to be downloaded to the local computer's hard drive).

20 Therefore, the present invention improves the object-oriented geospatial database disclosed in the pending commonly assigned application from the memory resident, stand-alone system and method to a file based distributed object-oriented geospatial database system and method thereof over a client/server network environment and in particular over the Internet using web-based capabilities to view geospatial data, such as vector, raster, hypertext and multimedia data, as well as remote updating of vector data. In particular, the object-oriented geospatial database of the present invention, which is also referred to as the geospatial information database (GIDB) or the geospatial information distribution system (GIDS), is an object oriented digital mapping database system implemented over a computer network system that provides rapid access to multiple mapping data types (i.e., geospatial data) over the computer network system, such as Internet, WWW or Intranet. Mapping data in the present invention is accessed from the GIDS based on user AOI. In particular, in contrast to typical

5 systems (e.g., GIS) providing access to mapping data, in the object-oriented geospatial
database (i.e., GIDS) of the present invention, any AOI request activates a portion of the
database associated with the AOI (i.e., data-driven queries) such that an object or many objects
can be accessed in near-real-time or real-time (as the case may be). The GIDS uses a
conventional object-oriented database management system (OODBMS), a conventional
10 interface technology, such as Common Object Request Broker Architecture (CORBA)
technology, and a conventional object oriented programming language, such as the Java
programming language, to provide rapid access to geospatial data over the network. The
GIDS incorporates multiple data types to meet the mapping requirements and needs of users or
a device or computer system requesting mapping information from the GIDS. Further, the
distributed object-oriented geospatial database system according to the present invention
supports additional geospatial data formats of ESRI shape files, GSF, oceanographic ASCII
text data provided by the NAVOCEANO, and geospatial data with temporal information. Yet
further, the distributed object-oriented geospatial database system according to the present
invention supports three-dimensional (3D) display of the geospatial data.

15
20 Figure 1 depicts a block diagram of a network of computer systems of the present
invention configured as clients and servers using a client/server system architecture, such as an
Internet or Intranet. Referring to Figure 1, browser clients 40 (sites 1-n), local client servers
42 (sites 1-m), and master server 44 are conventional computers or devices, such as hand-held
devices, communicating with each other over the networks 46 (networks 1-p) using
25 Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). Conventional, storage units
storing information (e.g., hard drives; drives for removable media, such as CD-R, CD-ROM,
DVD; or memory, such as RAM) (not shown), may be connected or be coupled to the
networks 46 or to browser clients 40 (sites 1-n), local client servers 42 (sites 1-m), and master
server 44. Further, conventional display units displaying information, such as images, may be
30 connected or be coupled to the networks 46 or to browser clients 40 (sites 1-n), local client
servers 42 (sites 1-m), and master server 44. Although, an exemplary embodiment of the

5 invention as described below is implemented over the Internet or Intranet using TCP/IP
connections to distribute and maintain information of an object-oriented database of geospatial
data of multiple data types, such as VPF, RPF, TPS, ESRI shape files, GSF, oceanographic
ASCII text data provided by NAVOCEANO and geospatial data with temporal information,
the invention is not limited to use with any particular type of network, computer system or
10 network communication protocol.

Figure 2, illustrates a diagram of software system to build, access and maintain
information of an object-oriented database of geospatial data of multiple data types in a
standalone or non-networked master server computer 50. The master server computer 50 is a
computer associated with the networked master server computer 44. The present invention is
directed to a file based object-oriented database of geospatial data of multiple data types in a
standalone or non-networked master server and a distributed object-oriented geospatial
database system and method thereof over a client/server network environment and in particular
over the Internet using web-based capabilities to view (i.e., query) geospatial data, such as
vector, raster, hypertext and multimedia data, as well as remote updating of vector data.

An introduction is provided to software system components of the object-oriented
geospatial database. The object-oriented geospatial database system of the invention, which is
also referred to as the geospatial information database (GIDB) or the geospatial information
distribution system (GIDS), has a client and server function architecture. GIDS is an object
oriented digital mapping database that provides access to mapping data over computer network
systems, such as Internet, World Wide Web (WWW) or Intranet. As shown in Figure 2, the
GIDS is composed of an object-oriented database server component or module 52a, interface
component 54 and client component or module 56 communicating with the server component
52a via or through the interface component 54. The database server 52a may be implemented
using a conventional object server. In a preferred embodiment, the database server 52a is
implemented using GemStone/S application server for Smalltalk (GemStone) by GemStone
Systems, Inc., Beaverton, Oregon, which is a commercial-off-the-shelf object-oriented

5 database management system (OODBMS) (i.e., object server) that stores, manipulates, and
processes objects referenced by client modules, such as client module 56. In particular,
GemStone is based on Smalltalk, providing a Smalltalk server development environment.
Further, client module 56 may be a Smalltalk client or a Web-based client applet, such as Java
client, which will be described in more detail below. The OODBMS allows expansion of the
10 GIDS to support world-wide database access driven by area of interest (AOI) queries.
Therefore, an AOI may be requested, for example, by a user, and the OODBMS allows a
portion of the database associated with the AOI to become active such that an object or many
objects can be accessed in near-real-time or real-time (as the case may be). The data is
permanently stored as objects in the OODBMS for future access. AOI queries will be described
in more detail below. The database server 52a includes two functional modules, one to store
geospatial data, including any non-spatial data, and another module to manipulate or process
the geospatial data. Based on the request from the client 56, the GemStone server 52a searches
and retrieves only those objects that meet the requested criteria. Data search for retrieval is
performed mostly on the server for any client, such as client 56, because GemStone is an
20 intelligent object server, storing, maintaining and referencing objects by name. Therefore, an
object can be searched and retrieved by specifying the object name. When displaying a
digitized map or image of a region, typical GIS relational database servers fetch at a page level
associated with the digitized map or image of the geographic region. However, sometimes the
exact content of the page may not be explicitly known by the GIS relational database servers.
25 In contrast, in an object-based server system, such as GemStone server 52a, contents of a page
can be stored and retrieved at an individual object level. A processing to determine what is on
the page can take place by the server rather than by the client.

Figure 3 shows the data structure of the database server 52a. In particular, the server
52a maintains vector mapping data, such as VPF data, by providing entry points for the client
30 56 at the VPFDATABASE class level. VPFDATABASE class is the superset of all VPF data.
VPFDATABASE class has a class variable or a global dictionary called "databases" that contains

Inventors: Wilson et al.
Serial No.

PATENT APPLICATION
Navy Case No. 80,172

5 all instances of the VPFDATABASE class. A root entry to any "feature" access begins with the "databases" of VPFDATABASE class.

10 The VPF data has a hierarchical structure. The "database" is used to group a set of data that is used for a specific purpose, e.g., Digital Nautical Chart (DNC) for navigation. The Database class contains a collection of "libraries". A "library" is used to group those "features" that are collected at a certain scale over a certain region. There may be some overlap or complete containment of one "library" into another. However, each "library" is unique based on the region and scale. Each "library" subsequently contains a collection of "coverages", where each "coverage" contains those "features" that are related by a common theme, e.g., transportation or cultural. A "database", "library" and "coverage (i.e., theme)" triad, represented as VPFDATABASE, VPFLibrary, and VPFCoverage classes uniquely identifies the "feature". The "feature" is defined at the "coverage" level. Due to tabular storage constraints, VPF data structure groups data yet at another layer, "tile". Each "tile" consists of some geographic extent in a minute by minute or a degree by degree manner. In particular, Figure 3 shows an example of a VMAAWE "database" having a collection of "libraries" such as Presidio, Oak Knoll, etc. A Monterey "library" consists of "coverages" or "themes" such as population, transportation, etc.

15
20
25 The server uses the "coverage" as the minimal grouping level for "features" or "objects". Every instance of the VPFCoverage has an instance of a dictionary collection called covQuad (not shown in Figure 3). A covQuad maintains all instances of a VPFSpatialDataManager for the "coverage". The VPFSpatialDataManager class represents a spatial indexing scheme for organizing or relating information or spatial data of differing data formats together. The GIDS uses a quadtree spatial indexing scheme to provide a hierarchical clustering of data based on the geographic area. The quadtree recursively divides an area into quadrants, each of which is called a quadcell. In the GIDS, the class named
30 VPFSpatialDataManager is created to represent a quadtree-indexing scheme. All spatial "objects" or "features" are stored and indexed in the quadtree. An insertion of an "object"

5 into the quadtree is based on a bounding box of the "object". A quadcell that will minimally contain the bounding box of the "object" will be selected to store the object.

The VPF data has three types of "features", including point, line and area (polygon). For efficient and faster access and retrieval, each "feature" type has a unique instance of a quadtree, i.e., there are three instances of VPFSpatialDataManager class. Therefore, a
10 covQuad will have three instances of VPFSpatialDataManager keyed by the feature type.

Any data access and retrieval (i.e., query) from the server 52a begins by specifying the "database", "library" and "coverage", typically through a terminal (e.g., browser client computer or graphical user interface 40) and electing a query transaction. A "feature" retrieval (which will be described in more detail below) may specify a part of an area or an
15 Area of Interest (AOI) by specifying a geographic extent or the entire area of the "database" and "library". This request is sent to the appropriate instance of VPFSpatialDataManager for actual "feature" retrieval. Therefore, the object-oriented database server 52a accommodates data-driven simple queries, constrained queries, and nested or complex queries of geospatial data, including non-spatial data, by the client 56.

20 Next, referencing Figure 2, the interface to database server 52a in master server computer 50 will be described. A conventional interface system (i.e., client) may be used to query, retrieve and update objects in database server 52a. In one embodiment, a Smalltalk interface system (i.e., Smalltalk client) is used, such as GemBuilder for Smalltalk 54, which is a commercial-off-the-shelf product. In particular, GemBuilder for Smalltalk 54 is an interface
25 between client 56 (i.e., Smalltalk AOI client) and GemStone database server 52a (i.e., Smalltalk server). In a preferred embodiment, which will be described below, an interface system observing CORBA specification or architecture is used. GemBuilder for Smalltalk also maintains its own object names. To establish a connection between Smalltalk AOI client 56 and GemStone 52a, a naming convention of each object must be resolved via a naming
30 interface. In other words, client 56 and server 52a must have an agreement on how to reference an object by name. GemBuilder for Smalltalk 54 provides those classes (i.e.,

5 naming interface) that institute a convention for referencing same objects between Smalltalk
AOI client 56 and GemStone 52a. For this reason, GemBuilder for Smalltalk 54 requires some
knowledge of the database design and implementation and the level of required detail is client
dependent. In particular, Smalltalk AOI client 56 connects to object server 52a through
GemBuilder for Smalltalk 54. The client 56 mainly populates, maintains, updates and exports
10 data. The client 56 is tightly-coupled to object server's 52a data design, i.e., class definition,
class states and behaviors. A similar, if not the same, class definition is used between object
server 52a and Smalltalk AOI client 56 so that client 56 closely replicates object server's 52a
data design. Due to the data encapsulation property, a reference to an object implies a
reference to a self contained object. For those objects that are maintained and managed by
15 object server 52a, a self-contained object can consist of a large web of references to other
objects, e.g., pointers. Since an object referenced by Smalltalk AOI client 56 is
self-contained, client 56 requests object server 52a to mainly search and return objects. In
most cases, client 56 then process the data on the client side. Therefore, client 56 expects
from the object server 52a those parts that are needed to solve and derive the solution. Thus,
20 Smalltalk AOI clients 56 can be considered as "fat clients," because the implementation details
are replicated on the clients, adding storage requirement. They are expected to process the
information retrieved from the object server 52a.

Referencing Figures 4A and 4B, software system to interface with the database server
52a in master server computer 44 over a network will be described. An interface system
25 observing CORBA specification or architecture to interface with a Smalltalk object-oriented
database server provides a heterogeneous development and integration environment. As shown
in Figure 4A, a preferred embodiment of the GIDS includes an object-oriented database server
component or module 52a, interface components 60a, 60b and client component or module
(i.e., Web-based client applet) 62 or Web-based applet (display and update) 64 in browser
30 client computer 40 and local client server computer 42 (respectively). The database server 52a
is in communication with Web-based client applet 62 or Web-based applet (display and update)

5 64 in browser client computer 40 and local client server computer 42 (respectively) over the
network 46 via or through interface components 60a and 60b. In the preferred embodiment,
the interface systems 60a and 60b observe a conventional CORBA specification or architecture.
An interface system observing CORBA specification or architecture to interface with a
Smalltalk object-oriented database server provides a heterogeneous development and
10 integration environment. Figure 4B is illustrating software system to interface with the
database server 52a in master server computer 44 in a network environment which uses
conventional firewall 70 to achieve information security protecting database server 52a. As
shown in Figure 4B, yet another preferred embodiment of the GIDS includes database server
52a, interface component 60 and Web-based client applet 62 or Web-based applet (display and
15 update) 64 in browser client computer 40 and local client server computer 42 (respectively).
The database server 52a is in communication with Web-based client applet 62 or Web-based
applet (display and update) 64 in browser client computer 40 and local client server computer
42 (respectively) over the network 46 and through firewall 70 via interface component 60.
Web-based applet (display and update) 64 is in communication with database server 52b.
20 Software system in local client server computer (i.e., local update client server or GIDS
client/server) 42 will be described in more detail below as part of description of the distributed
architecture of the geospatial database system according to the present invention.

25 Figures 5A, 5B, 6A and 6B, illustrate the software system in Figures 4A and 4B in
more detail respectively, in particular interface system 60. The software system of database
system according to the present invention shown in Figures 5A and 5B is essentially the same
as software system of database system according to the present invention when firewall 70 is
used as shown in Figures 6A and 6B, excepting for location of certain system components or
modules, which will be described in more detail below. Therefore, the software system of
database system according to the present invention will be described with reference to Figures
30 5A and 5B. As mentioned above, interface system 60 complies with CORBA specification.
The main component of the CORBA specification is the Object Request Broker (ORB). The

5 ORB is responsible for intercepting an object request, locating the object for handling the request and invoking the correct method on that object. This often involves converting parameters from a common data type to a language-specific data type and vice versa (a process known as marshaling and unmarshaling), as well as returning results from the invoked method. Any two ORBs that are CORBA compliant can provide communication between their application objects or ORB vendors (e.g., database server 52a and client 62), regardless of programming language or platform. Therefore, a conventional ORB may be used on or with the client side, e.g., Web-based client applet 62 or Web-based applet (display and update) 64, and a conventional ORB may be used on or with the server side, e.g., database server 52a. The ORBs correspond to interface system 60a, 60b in Figure 4A and interface system 60 in Figure 4A. Therefore, ORBs establish transmission means for communicating object requests to display, select and query objects interactively between application objects. Referencing Figure 5A, in the preferred embodiment, VisiBroker ORB 60b by Inprise Corporation, Inc., Scotts Valley, California, is used with the Web-based client applet 62 and GemORB 60a by GemStone Systems, Inc. is used with the database server or GemStone server application 52a. In particular, VisiBroker ORB is used as a Java ORB and GemORB is a Smalltalk ORB, which establish communication between a Smalltalk based database server 52a and a Java client applet 62 over network 46, which provides a heterogeneous object-oriented database system environment. These two vendor ORBs allow communication between applications (i.e., database server 52a and Web-based client applet 62) via CORBA's Internet Inter-ORB Protocol (IIOP) 86. The use of ORBs, such as GemORB and VisiBroker ORB is transparent to anyone accessing the applet 62.

With reference to Figure 6A, in the database system according to the present invention when firewall 70 is used, VisiBroker ORB 60b executes in server computer 44. In Figure 6A, ORBs 60a and 60b (i.e., interface system) are associated with interface system 60 in Figure 4B. A Web-based server applet, such as Java server applet 88, interfaces Web-based client applet 62 with VisiBroker ORB 60b via network 46 using a conventional network protocol,

5 such as HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP). When firewall 70 is used, data is HTTP-
wrapped to get it through the firewall, then unwrapped by the server applet 88 and sent via
standard CORBA IIOP to the ODBMS.

Figure 5A illustrates software system in browser client computer 40 in more detail. In
particular, Web-based client applet 62 is embedded in a conventional mark up language
10 document, such as HyperText Markup Language (HTML) document 80, processed by
conventional Web browser software 82, such as Netscape Navigator 4.5 by Netscape
Communications Corporation or Microsoft Internet Explore by Microsoft Corporation. In the
preferred embodiment, in which Web-based client applets 62 and 64 are implemented using
Java, the Web browser software 82 would be a Java-enabled Web browser software. Since the
Web-based client applet 62 is implemented at browser level, it is operating system
15 independent.

With reference to Figure 5A, GemORB 60a establishes a connection to the object
server 52a through CORBA compliant communication. GemORB 60a provides those classes
that represent and implement CORBA. Unlike GemBuilder for Smalltalk 54, a connection via
GemORB 60a by client (i.e., GemORB client) 62 does not require an in-depth knowledge of
20 the system design and implementation of object server 52a. An Interface Definition Language
(IDL) file defines a correct mapping of objects between the client and the server (i.e., Java
client applet 62 and object server 52a). An IDL file also defines operations or methods that
are available for client 62 to invoke on the server 52a. Since GemORB 60a is based on
25 CORBA, all the benefits of interoperability among programming languages and platforms
apply. In ORB based client and server architecture, in contrast to GemBuilder for Smalltalk
54, GemORB client 62 does not reflect server's 52a design. The GemORB client 62
interfacing with object server 52a using VisiBroker ORB 60b and GemORB 60a minimizes
information maintenance and storage by relying on the object server 52a to be a centralized
30 data storage as well as a centralized processing center. The GemORB client 62 requests
information from object server 52a expecting the object server 52a to search and completely

5 process information. The GemORB client 62 will receive fully processed information that can
be readily used without further processing. GemORB clients 62 expect an answer to a
question, while Smalltalk AOI clients 56 expect from the object server 52a those parts that are
needed to solve and derive the solution. Thus, in contrast to Smalltalk AOI client 56,
GemORB client 62 is considered a "thin client" because the implementation of objects are not
10 represented in client 62 (i.e., there are not much processing involved on the client side).

Next the preferred embodiment of Web-based client applet implemented using Java (i.e.
Java client applet Web mapping toolkit) 62 executing in client computer 40 will be described.
The objective of Java client applet 62 is to have an Internet Java-based mapping client, which
provides display and query capabilities from a set of geographic objects (i.e., geospatial data),
such as raster images and vector "features". These geographic objects would be retrieved
from GemStone OODBMS 52a, which acts or functions as a server, and displayed by the Java
client applet 62. In particular, client applet 62 uses conventional core Java classes to draw the
"features" and images on the display screen of the computer. In particular, all drawings occur
within a Java Panel or a Java Frame created within the applet. A Graphics context is created
and then the "feature" is drawn within the Graphics context. If the "feature" is a point, then
gc.fillOval function is used to draw a small circle representing the point "feature". If the
"feature" is a line, such as a road, the vg.drawline function is used. If the "feature" is an
area, such as a building, a Polygon is defined with coordinates of the building and then the
gc.fillPolygon function is used.

25 As discussed above, communication between the Java client applet 62 and GemStone
server 52a is accomplished using VisiBroker ORB 60b and GemORB 60a CORBA compliant
ORBs. Figures 5B and 6B show application level protocol 84 to transmit data-driven query
and response messages between Web-based client applet 62 and object server 52a. The
application level protocol 84 is a higher level protocol in relation to IIOP 86 in protocol
30 hierarchy between Web-based client applet 62 and object server 52a.

Next, application protocol 84 will be described in more detail. The retrieval of

5 “features” from the server database 52a is based on the AOI concept. Figures 7 and 8 show
display screen of the Java client applet 62 displaying a world map from which a user can select
a location graphically through the use of a rectangle (bounding box). The user also has the
option of entering the coordinates for the AOI manually, or selecting a predetermined region as
shown in Figure 8. From the user input, a bounding box of the AOI is transmitted from client
10 applet 62 via CORBA to Smalltalk server 52a. The server 52a responds with a set of
“database” and “library” names for which data is available in the selected region. As
discussed above, National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) provides VPF data in
“databases”, and each “database” contains one or more “libraries”. As shown in Figure 9, the
user then selects a “database”, “library” and “theme” (shown as “coverage” in Figure 9).
15 Once a “database” is selected, all “libraries” for the selected “database” are provided or
displayed. Once a “library” is selected, all “themes” for the selected “library” are provided
or displayed as well as a list of all of the “features” for all of the “themes” is provided or
displayed (as shown in “All features from all coverages” box in Figure 9). Once a particular
“theme” is selected, set of “features” associated with the selected “theme”, resulting (as
20 shown in “Features From Selected Coverage box in Figure 9) in a list of “feature” classes
associated with the selected “theme”, is returned from the server 52a through another CORBA
request. Finally as shown in Figure 9, the user may select the desired “feature” classes of the
selected AOI and submit a request for them to be displayed by clicking on the Display Selected
Feature(s) button. The “feature” request results in another CORBA communication from
25 applet 62 to server 52a, and server 52a returns to applet 62 a set of all of the requested
“feature” classes, which are located in the given AOI. In particular, after clicking on Display
Selected Features in Figure 9, a map (e.g., raster image) appears showing the selected
“features”. Fig. 10 shows a display screen for displaying the returned or available “features”
for the selected AOI with reference to a map image. In particular, Figure 10 show a display of
30 the returned “features” with reference to an available raster image associated with the AOI.
The “features” that are returned are complex objects with both geometric (coordinate) and

5 attribute information. The applet 62 can then display, select, and query on the returned
"features" as shown in Figure 10.

10 In particular, in Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10, each menu selection, for example, by
highlighting a menu item (e.g., "database" UVMMOUT in Figure 9) using a pointing device
or keyboard connected to computer 40, causes a query request according to application
protocol 84 for available or active geospatial data (i.e., data-driven query over a network) from
Web-based client applet 62 in computer 40 to server 52a, for example, in computer 44. In
particular, each visual screen is a representation of active data. Further, with data-driven
queries, there is no need to know the data-structure to query for information, since any
information associated with an AOI is provided upon query. Therefore, the application
protocol 84 establishes data zoom means for querying, selecting and displaying available
geospatial data objects associated with a geographic area of interest from a geospatial object-
oriented database over a network. An advantage of having Web-based client access to an
object-oriented mapping database is to give end users the ability to interactively access and use
geospatial data quickly (i.e., in near real-time or real-time as the case may be) and efficiently.
20 As discussed above, users of geospatial data typically must have separate software installed
into their computer system to view the geospatial data also resident on their own computer
systems, and must obtain the data on CD-ROM or other storage media. The Web-based client
applet 62 allows any user with a computer or device with Web browser technology, such as
Netscape 4.5, to access the GIDS over the Internet and display map data available in the user's
area of interest. In addition to display of map objects, the functionality of the Web-based
client applet 62 includes zoom capabilities (i.e., data level zoom) as simple queries, individual
"feature" selection, "attribute" queries, geometrical queries, and updates of "attribute" values.

25 As shown in Figure 10, after the selected "features" in the user's AOI have been
returned to Web-based client applet 62 from server 52a and displayed by Web-based client
applet 62, the user can perform other functions on the selected "features" and to query
30 additional information and details associated with the selected "features" (e.g., "attributes" of

the "feature"). For example, an individual "feature" may be selected (i.e., queried) by performing a single action of clicking on the "feature" on the map pane, resulting in sending a query or request to server 52a and receiving a response from server 52a of active data objects, such as the multimedia information of that "feature" and "attributes" of that "feature", which includes information, such as name, scale, and other details (i.e., a simple query). The Web-based client applet 62 then displays multimedia information of that "feature" and "attributes" of that "feature". In Figure 10 the "features" are represented on the map by square symbols, although other representations, such as graphical icons or NIMA's symbols may also be used. Further, with reference to Figure 10, the user can change the colors of the "features" to distinguish between the "feature" classes retrieved and other available "feature" classes. A color key may be shown providing the color, "feature" class, and number of those "features" in the user's selected AOI. The user also may have the ability to change the color of the background. Zoom capabilities are provided, allowing the user to zoom in, zoom out, or zoom to a user-specified area in the AOI. As discussed above, in contrast to traditional GIS systems, the zoom function is at the data level rather than at the visual level. Each individual map screen display in the database system of the present invention is a representation of active or available data.

With reference to Figure 10, a query may also be performed by clicking on the Query button. This query lists all of the "features" in the map pane and gives the user access to "attribute" information of each "feature". More advanced queries may also be performed. The advanced query allows users to display new "feature" classes in the AOI. The user may also perform "attribute-level" queries. For example, the user can request for all of the four-lane roads to be highlighted, or for all buildings that function as government buildings to be highlighted. Users can also perform geometrical queries, such as "find all buildings that are greater than 50 feet from the road," or "find all homes that are within 20 meters of the Embassy."

Next the query functions of the present invention will be described in more detail. In

5 particular, the query functions include five types of query. A simple query, displays a list of
“features” on the map. Clicking on one the “features” in the list provides or retrieves from
server 52a information on selected “feature” and will highlight the feature red on the map.

10 Figure 11 shows a display screen for advanced query. This display screen shows the
selected database and library associated with the AOI. A list of “features” is also provided,
which upon selection (i.e., query) will appear on the map in light green. The user can choose
more than one, and the last one chosen will appear in light green, otherwise it will be the color
specified on the color code (which can be changed by clicking on the color) that appears below
the map in Figure 10. The results of the query are shown in the box labeled Results for
Selected Query in Figure 11. If one of these results is clicked or selected, the “attributes” of
the “feature” clicked on will appear under Attributes for Selected Results. To do an attribute
level query, the attribute-level query button is clicked or selected. After two queries are
performed in the advance query mode, the Geometrical button may be clicked or selected,
which accommodates finding all “features” that are certain distances from other “features.”
Distances between “features” may be calculated using conventional formulas or routines, for
example, by converting latitude-longitude coordinates to screen coordinates and vice versa.

15
20
25
30
With reference to Figure 12, temporal queries may be performed. In particular,
another data type included in the object-oriented geospatial database of the present invention is
time-varying information associated with data. Therefore, GIDS includes data that has both
spatial and temporal aspects or information. For example, temporal information collected by
environmental sensors (i.e., a “feature” or spatial data information) in the AOI allows the user
to query weather conditions in the AOI by inputting the time range and the requirements for
the environmental sensors. This would be a temporal-to-spatial type query. The user is then
presented with a list of times that meet those requirements and from which the user can choose
to view pictures and charts of the results. A query may also be made from spatial-to-temporal
for spatial data (i.e., an environmental sensor or “feature” on the map) that has temporal
information.

5 With reference to Figure 13, "attribute" query allows the user to view individual types of "features" and their properties. For example, by clicking on "Roads" under the Feature Class pull-down menu and "Median Category" under the Attributes pull-down menu in Figure 13. Such query would color-code the roads on the map as to whether they have medians.

10 With reference to Figure 14, "distance" query displays a graphical user interface window with a map (which is a data object queried and displayed by Web-based client applet 62). The user may click anywhere on this map and then somewhere else to find the distance between the two points (i.e., distances between anywhere the user clicks on the screen). Above the second point is the distance of that leg. If the user clicks somewhere else, the distance between the new point and the point before it is shown above. The total distance of the "journey" (as shown in Figure 14) is shown to the right of the map. A "journey" is the distance between the first point in the first line segment to the second point in the last line segment. Similar to geometrical queries discussed above, distances between points selected on the display screen of the computer displaying the AOI data object (i.e., the map) may be calculated using conventional formulas or routines, for example, by converting latitude-longitude coordinates to screen coordinates and vice versa. For example, within Web-based client applet 62, a GreatCircleDistance class calculates the distance between 2 points called GeoPoints (a latitude and a longitude). The GeoPoints are created in the applet by using the range of the AOI and the mouse click location. Figure 14A shows a JAVA code section of the applet that calculates the distance between two points selected on the display screen of the computer on which Web-based applet 62 is executing (e.g., computer 40). With reference to Figure 14A, "distance" in the code section is the great circle distance between 2 points clicked on the screen, with gpPoint1 being the first point and gpPoint2 being the second point of a line segment formed between two points clicked.

25 Figure 15 shows a display screen for querying multimedia items relating to the AOI by selecting the multimedia button in Figure 10. Selection of the Preferences button in Figure 10 allows Change Background and Display Text Features functions. Figure 16 shows a display

5 screen for changing the background color of the map or as raster options place the map on top of an image (i.e., satellite picture of the area or aeronautical chart). Figure 17 shows a display screen for displaying any text that belongs on the map.

Figure 18A shows a display screen for downloading "libraries", "coverages" or "features" queried and displayed on the map by selecting the download button in Figure 10.

10 Links to the files may be e-mailed to another over the network 46. Figure 18B shows a display screen for allowing the user to determine what "feature" types to draw and in what order to draw them.

Update of "attributes" of a "feature" is also possible with the Web-based client applet 62. The Add Features function, which may also be implemented as an Update Feature function, initiated by clicking on the Add Feature button in Figure 10 allows the user to choose what "features" to add or what "features" to Update (as the case may be) in the map after the map has been displayed showing the "features" selected by the user (i.e., after clicking on Display Selected Features in Figure 9 as discussed above). For example, a newly paved road could have its "attribute" for surface type updated from "gravel" to "concrete." In a preferred embodiment, this function of the applet would be password protected so that only users with authorization can change data in the database.

With reference to Figure 10, the user may also perform Internet queries based on the selected AOI. A user can perform an Internet query by selecting the Internet Query button, and then selecting "Weather", "News", "Yellow Pages", or "Other Maps". For example, if the user decides to find out the weather for the current AOI, upon receiving a request from the Web-based client applet 62, the server 52a will locate the nearest city to the user's AOI and will open a web page (using conventional web browsing functions) with that city's local weather forecast.

Next with reference to Figures 19 through 30, a function of displaying in 3-D "features" in the selected AOI and represented in the raster image of Figure 10 will be described. The user may obtain a Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) generated 3-D

5 model of the "features" in the current AOI. One embodiment of the of the present invention
uses the open standard of VRML 2.0 format for 3-D modeling of land and underwater terrain,
natural "features", and man-made "features". A conventional VRML viewer (3D rendering
software) executed as a browser plug-in on the computer executing a Web browser (e.g.,
computer 40) is used to display VRML outputs generated in server 52a. Other programing
10 languages may be used to render 3D images, such as Java 3D Application Programming
Interface (API). 3-D models are generated using gridded, Triangulated Irregular Network
(TIN), and vector data.

In particular, VRML is a widely used open standard for describing and displaying 3D
scenes or worlds over the Internet. The VRML format is a plain text file format that can be
edited with a text editor. However, editing complex scenes containing many polygons would
be extremely tedious without software designed for VRML. All of the point "features", such
as street signs, coniferous trees, park benches, may be created with conventional or
commercial-off-the-shelf VRML software tools or downloaded from VRML repositories on the
Internet. In contrast, in the present invention the area and line "features" are created at run-
time by interpreting the objects in server 52a.

Figure 19 illustrates the flow of operations in Web-based client applet 62 to generate
3D model of the "features" in the current AOI. The Web-based client applet 62 retrieves for
point "features" information from a digital terrain elevation database at 100. Then at 102, the
Web-based client applet 62 retrieves for area and line "features" two dimensional geospatial
data, such as VPF, from server 52a. The Web-based client applet 62 regenerates the
"relative" geometry of the two dimensional data at 104. Then, at 106 the three dimensional
image is generated using the regenerated two dimensional data of 104 and the digital terrain
elevation information of 100. The VRML models will provide additional information about
the AOI by immersing the viewer into and allowing interaction with a virtual world.

Next the 3D modeling will be described in more detail. The 3D object "feature"
classes were created in a hierarchy similar to the VPF layout. VPF has 4 basic "feature"

5 categories: point, line, area, and text. Once the 2D “features” are converted to 3D “feature”
objects, they know their state and behavior. For example, once a 2D VPF building “feature”
is converted to a 3D VRML Building object “feature”, then the Web-based client applet 62 can
send the VRML Building object a message to output itself in VRML format. The VRML
Building object inherits methods (behavior) and instance variables (state information) from its
10 superclasses VRML Area Feature (area features) and VRML Object (base objects), as shown
in Figure 20.

Each 3D “feature” contains a reference to the objectified 2D “feature”, VRML
coordinates, and derived attributes. The reference to the objectified 2D feature, persisted in the
OODBMS, allows for fast and easy retrieval with all the original “attributes” and location
15 information. The VRML coordinates are calculated from the original latitude and longitude
information stored with the “feature”. The derived “attributes” are calculated using the
original “attributes” and specific knowledge of their meanings. For example in Figure 21,
information for rendering the building roofs is derived from the Structure Shape of Roof (SSR)
“attribute”. Translating 2D VPF “features” to 3D VRML “features” requires some prior
20 knowledge of the source data. For example, the source VPF data, as stored in object server
52a, was designed to be viewed on a 2D map. Further, the VPF “feature” types and
“attributes” are not always consistent across source databases. Figure 22 shows some of the
mappings of VPF to VRML “features”. The mappings are stored in a dictionary class and can
be easily updated. Adding a bridge line to the 3D scene would require adding a key #bridgel
25 and value #VRMLTransLine to the dictionary. Of course, the VPF “feature” type #bridgel
would have to exist in the 2D source database. Therefore, certain code changes to the
VRMLTransLine class specific to bridge line “features” may also be needed.

The coordinate information stored in the 2D objects is in latitude/longitude decimal
degrees. These coordinates must be converted to the VRML coordinate system. The VRML
30 origin is located at the north-west corner of the AOI at elevation of zero. VRML uses a
Cartesian, right-handed, three-dimensional coordinate system. The standard convention is to

use meters as the unit of measure with the VRML coordinate system. Transforming a location of the “feature” to the 3D world is done in several steps given that the AOI has been selected and the origin is located in the north-west corner of the AOI.

1. Calculate meters per degree for latitude and longitude using the AOI latitude
2. Calculate VRML coordinates

Area Features:

1. Calculate the lat/lon center of the feature's bounding box
2. Calculate lat/lon distance of feature's center from origin and convert to VRML map coordinate
3. Calculate the VRML coordinates of the feature's polygon.
4. Translate the VRML polygon coordinates about the origin
5. Build feature (generate VRML) about the origin .
6. Translate feature to location from step 2

Line and Point Features:

1. Calculate VRML map coordinates from feature's lat/lon coordinates
3. Return VRML node for 3D feature

The above operations are associated with 102 through 106 in Figure 19.

Many of the point “features” are constructed with the VRMLIndexFaceSet node.

“Features” such as fire hydrants and trees require many faces to provide a realistic looking object. When a VRML scene contains many complex features, rendering speed can drop to levels that cause the viewing to be jerky and disorienting to the user. Rendering speeds of 10 frames per second or less are generally considered to be too slow. The VRML player (i.e., software module that generates 3D image according to Figure 19) must render all objects within the field of view even though they may be far away. The level-of-detail (LOD) node is one way of optimizing the scene. The LOD node contains center, level, and range fields. The center field defaults to 0.0 0.0 0.0. The level field specifies a list of shape nodes for multiple definitions of the object. The range field specifies a list of viewer-to-shape distances to tell the

5 browser when to change from one LOD to another. The ranges are listed in increasing values
where the first distance indicates the highest LOD, first node in the level field list. For
example, the LOD node in Figure 23 describes 3 levels of detail for the fire hydrant point
“feature”. The first level "FireHydrant1.wrl" contains a complex IndexFaceSet node version
that will be displayed when the viewer is within 100 meters. The second level
10 "FireHydrant2.wrl" contains a simple Cylinder node version that will be displayed in the 100-
200 meter range. (Figure 24). The third level is an empty Group node that displays no
representation beyond 200 meters. Using LOD nodes provides a way to provide both high
realism and performance.

Some of the most difficult problems in generating realistic VRML scenes come from a
lack of complete shape information. VPF building area “features”, for example, may not
include enough information to accurately recreate the buildings as they actually appear. For
example, building “attributes” from the VPF data set include height, foot print polygon,
function category, roof type, and a few others. Further, building roofs have one “attribute”
(i.e., SSR). As discussed above, SSR has values of flat or pitched. Therefore, 2D data may
not be good choice for 3D rendering but desirable to use because of ample available data.
Although, flat roofs may be easily rendered in 3D, pitched roofs pose more complex problems
because the buildings may be curved or have a complex shape. A solution in the present
invention for constructing building and pitched roofs on a non-rectangular building is to use an
Extrusion node. The Extrusion node has a scale field that defines a list of scale-factor pairs for
25 each point along the spine. The scale values from 1.0 to 0.0 decrease the objects scale with 1.0
leaving the object unchanged. Scale values greater than one increase the size of the object. The
roof Extrusion was scaled from 1.0 to 0.0 giving the roof a gradual slant up to the apex
(Figure 25).

Rendering line “features” such as roads and rivers also presents some problems. Many
30 of the road “features” are sometimes finely segmented into separate “features” in VPF, which
causes problems when converting and rendering in 3D. In particular, conventional 3D

5 rendering software may have difficulty when drawing Extrusions, as used for line "features",
that have single segment spines that are extruded along the ground. The road Extrusions may
not lie flat in such cases. One solution in the present invention is to combine single segment
road "features" with adjacent road "features" that share a node. After selectively processing
and combining the line "features", the roads render flat on the ground. Further, road edges
10 from segment to segment along the spine were smooth out.

Next, with reference to Figures 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B and 26 through 30, software system in
local client server computer 42 will be described. In particular, software system of local client
server computer 42 has the dual function of server and client, according to operations
performed or requested, thereby causing computer 42 to act as a client server in relation to
master server computer 44 or as a local server in relation to Browser client computers 40.

For information distribution from a GIDS server, such as master server 44 or local
client server 42, to a GIDS client, such as Browser client 40, both the server database
application 52a and the client database application 52b as shown in Figures 4A, 4B and 26 may
be identical. Further, Web-based applet 64 in local client server computer 42 acting as local
server or local client server, and Web-based applet 62 in Browser client 40 may be identical.
A peer-to-peer system configuration for CORBA has been implemented. A well-defined set of
methods in an IDL file is used between systems to query and retrieve objects. Any system can
become a server and client based on the needs.

A role of server and client is based on the role a GIDS system assumes. A GIDS
25 system can be a server to a suite of clients for a certain type of data set. However, the same
GIDB system can be a client server in relation to some other server for another data set. This
capability demonstrates a "smart client pull" information flow, which is described below.

1. A server computer 44 is up and running continuously. Client computers 42 are
on-line as needed.

2. Both database server 52a and client server 52b maintain a log. The database server
30 52a maintains an update server history log 120. The client server 52b maintains a client

5 history log 122. These are represented in Figure 27.

3. A client initiates an update check. When a user logs onto the Gemstone server 52b (via Browser client 40), a request is sent to the server 52a via ORB-to-ORB communication (i.e., interface system 60a, 60b or 60 in case firewall 70 exists) to check for any update. A check, on whether client server 52b needs an update, from server's 52b client history log 122 is based on a time stamp and the state of the "feature" in terms of its location and "attributes".

This "smart client pull" allows a background processing to automatically update the changes from the selected server. Therefore, an interactive processing from the user is not required to initiate the update. It is also possible to have no user interaction for the actual update process; the system could be set up to automatically update the changes based on well-defined criteria.

The GIDS server 52a records all updates in server history log 120. The server history log 120 is maintained as a class variable to VPFDDatabase and can be viewed by inspecting "VPFDDatabase historyLog". The format of server history log 120 is shown in Figure 27. When a "feature" is updated, an instance of a CORBA VectorFeature as defined in the IDL file is created and added to the appropriate feature collection in server history log 120. The "coverage" date/time stamp in server history log 120 is changed to reflect the date/time that this "feature" was updated. Thus, the "coverage" date/time stamp reflects the date/time of the most recent update that has occurred within the "coverage".

When a client server, such as client server 52b, receives updates from another server, such as server 52a, all updates are recorded in client history log 122 as described above regarding server history log 120. In so doing, this client can then be a server to another client. Therefore, in addition to recording the updates in server history log 120, a client server also keeps a record of the updates in a client history log 122. The client history log 122 is maintained as a class variable to VPFDDatabase and can be viewed by inspecting 'VPFDDatabase clientHistoryLog'. The format of the client history log 122 is shown in Figure 28. The client history log 122 records the date/time of the latest update for each "coverage" from another

5 server. It is used to determine whether any updates have occurred since the last time the client server was updated by another server.

With reference to Figure 29, the application level protocol 130 implementing database update over the network will be described. When client server 52b in client server 42 logs on, the system automatically sends a CORBA request to server 52a for a list of available updates. During the login, the server 52b invokes the server-side method `getUpdateLogFromServer`. This server-side method checks the server 52a server history log 120 for updates. A list of strings comprised of "database", "library", and "coverage" names with time stamps, such as 'db1-lib1-cov1-01/27/99 13:37:37', is returned to server 52b. The server 52b code then compares time stamps from the returned list of available updates with time stamps from the client history log 122 to determine if the updates are needed on server 52b. If server 52b does need to be updated, a window appears (as the case may be) allowing the user to select which updates to perform, as shown in Figure 30.

The user may choose to update all, some, or none of the "coverages". The items selected for update are then added to client history log 122. As an item is being added to client history log 122, log 122 is checked to determine if the "coverage" has been updated previously. If so, the time stamp for that "coverage" is updated, and the server 52a time stamp is replaced with the previous update time stamp. If not, the server 52a time stamp is replaced with the word "none". The time stamp replacement is used to prevent the server 52a from sending back "features" that have already been updated. After the client history log 122 is changed, the server-side 52b method `getFeaturesToUpdate: updateSelections` is invoked (i.e., a CORBA request is sent to server 52a).

For each item in the `updateSelections` list, the server 52a finds the collection of updated "features" for the selected "coverage". If the item in the `updateSelections` list has "none" in place of its time stamp, then all of the "features" for this "coverage" are placed in the set of "features" to be updated. Otherwise, the time stamp from the `updateSelections` list "coverage" is compared to the time stamp of each "feature" in server 52a. If the "feature" in the server

5 52a was updated at a later date and time than the "coverage" from server 52b, then the
"feature" is added to the set of "features" to be updated. This set of "features" to be updated
is then returned to the server 52b.

10 When server 52b in client server computer 42 receives the set of "features" to be
updated, each "feature" in the set is updated. If the changeType is ADD, then a new "feature"
is created based on the parameters of the VectorFeature. Otherwise, the local client server 52b
feature which matches the VectorFeature to be changed, deleted, or moved must be found in
server 52b. The local client server 52b "feature" is found by using the VectorFeature
featname and identifier (id). The oldAttributes and oldCoords are then compared with the
local client server 52b feature to verify that the VectorFeature and the local client feature are
indeed the same.

15
20
25
30 There may be two potential sources for conflict in the search for a match. First, a
server 52b may have locally updated the "feature". Since all GIDS systems have a capability
to update "feature" data, a local update could have potentially taken place. A local update has
precedence over the network update. Secondly, a "feature" can be uniquely identified by its
"database", "library", "coverage", "feature" class, and id. NIMA distributes its data with an
additional identifier, an edition number. The latest edition will be a superset of all changes
from the previous editions. The changes from one edition to another may coincide with the
changes in client history log 122. However, the changes that take place by NIMA and the
changes via GIDS may be an independent effort. Because the edition numbers might not be
maintained by GIDS (assumed to have the latest released edition), there may be a mismatch in
the edition of the server 52a and client server 52b. Therefore, using the VectorFeature
featname and identifier (id) may not uniquely identify a feature. If the VectorFeature cannot
be verified as a match to a local client feature, then the update for the VectorFeature will not
occur.

30 When the "feature" has been validated, the local client server 52b "feature" is then
changed, deleted, or moved based on the parameters of the VectorFeature. As discussed

5 above, client history log 122 will be modified to reflect these updates from server 52a.

10 The object-oriented geospatial database system (i.e., GIDS) of the present invention allows users interested in a wide variety of mapping data to access and benefit from the GIDS over the Internet from any platform using a Web-enabled web browser. This allows the functionality of more powerful server machines to be exhibited on less capable client machines. This also gives users faster access to mapping data. The migration to a Web-based mapping client is advantageous by allowing clients with modest computing resources user-friendly access to state-of-the-art mapping data and software. Given an AOI, the GIDS provides multiple mapping data types for that region to the user for visualization (2D or 3D) and analysis. Further, with data-driven query capabilities over the network, data dissemination will be near-real-time or real-time (as the case may be) over the network. In summary, the GIDS fulfills a much needed requirement to provide mapping data of multiple types in an AOI to user in near-real-time or real-time (as the case may be) over a network, such as WWW.

15
20 Current alternative geospatial data systems obtain discrete data via CD-ROM or other media to then load the data into various software packages to individually generate 3D views, perform GIS queries, and perform other functionalities. There is no unified approach available.

25 The many features and advantages of the present invention are apparent from the detailed specification and thus, it is intended by the appended claims to cover all such features and advantages of the system which fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

Further, numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art from the disclosure of this invention. It is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation illustrated and described; accordingly, suitable modification and equivalents may be resorted to, as falling within the scope and spirit of the invention.